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Christmas Exhibition

La Salle University Art Museum

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Christmas Exhibition

La Salle University Art Museum
December 1, 1988 - January 17, 1989

Noel Nicholas Coypel (1690-1784), French

Rest on the Flight into Egypt 1724

Signed and dated, lower right: N. Coypel f.1724

Oil on canvas

39 x 28 1/4 ins.

88-P-346

Purchased with funds provided by
William S. Serri

Provenance: Frohlich, Vienna, 1936; Barbara B. Von
Goetz, 1969

Exhibited: Atlanta High Museum of Art, *The Rococo Age*
1983, catalogue by Eric M. Zafran, p.36, no.5, illus.
p.26; Rochester, Memorial Art Gallery of the
University of Rochester, *La Grande Maniere: Historical
and Religious Painting in France, 1700-1800*, May 2 -
July 26, 1987, catalogue by Donald A. Rosenthal,
p. 79, no. 12, illus. p. 80

Literature: David Lomax, "Noel-Nicholas Coypel (1690-
1734)", *Revue de l'Art*, vol. LVII, 1982, p. 42, fig.
24

The soft light colors, curvilinear lines of the flowing drapery and spontaneity of the balanced composition places this painting in the *Rococo* style as discussed on p.38 of the *La Salle Guide to the Collection*. There is a quiet and gentle composure to the scene which imparts a human immediacy to the sacred subject seldom seen in the previous century when the dramatic intensity of the religious event was usually stressed. The Holy Family is naturalistically and solidly rendered, and in spite of Joseph's somewhat pensive mood, the overall tone is one of lightness and charm so reflective of *Rococo* taste.

While the Flight into Egypt was portrayed in the visual arts as early as the 8th century, the Rest on the Flight was not treated as a separate theme until the second half of the 14th century.¹ During The Middle Ages and the early Renaissance periods the need was felt to emphasize the divinity of Christ in religious images. Therefore, the miracles associated with the rest on the flight (the bending down of the palm tree branch so the fruit could be reached and the springing forth of the well in the desert to provide water) were usually portrayed. Moreover, the Virgin and Child were generally given prominence in the composition while Joseph was placed off to the side, often involved in a separate occupation. By the beginning of the 17th century the apocryphal miracles are less frequently portrayed, and

by the 18th century the Holy Family often becomes an integrated unit in the composition as seen in this painting. 2

It has been suggested that the ancient pyramid, temple and church in the background of this painting refer to the three historical eras: pagan, Jewish, and Christian respectively. The headless putto and other ancient ruins glimpsed at the lower right of Joseph's drapery allude to the passing of the pagan religion while the budding plant beside these ruins suggests the advent of the new Christian faith. (See similar symbolic references in *The Flight into Egypt* by Van Scorel in La Salle's 16th century gallery, and by Bourdon in the 17th century gallery).

Noel Nicholas Coypel has been undeservedly overlooked because of the greater fame of his father, Noel, his half-brother, Antoine, and his nephew, Charles Antoine, though recent scholarship is beginning to rectify this situation.

In 1720, Noel Nicholas Coypel became a full academician of the French Academy where he later taught in 1733 (Chardin was among his pupils). While primarily a painter of mythological subjects, Coypel was commissioned to do numerous decorations for churches in Paris, Versailles, and Chantilly. The Flight into Egypt was an exceedingly popular Biblical theme in the early 18th century, and it is likely that this intimate piece may have been commissioned by a wealthy or noble family for a private chapel in one of the city homes the Parisians called their hotels.

Notes

1. Gertrud Schiller, *Iconographie De L'Art Chretien*, Vol. II. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957) p. 122.
2. For a discussion of the Flight into Egypt theme in art see the La Salle University Art Museum exhibition catalogue, *The Flight into Egypt*, December 10, 1987 - January 22, 1988.

Caroline Wistar
Curator

2. A. Duflos (1700-1786), French
After G.F.L. Debrie

The Angel Warns Joseph in a Dream 1728

Engraving

3. Unknown (17th century)

*The Holy Family Prepares for the
Flight into Egypt*

Engraving

4. Johannes Jacobsz Folkema (17th century),
Dutch. After a painting by Jacopo
Tintoretto (1518-1594), Italian

*The Massacre of Herod of the Infants
of Bethlehem*

Engraving

5. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Dutch

Flight into Egypt: Crossing a Brook 1654

Etching and drypoint

Early Basan edition. Re-strike impression pulled around 1906 by the owners of the plate (Basan-Bernard Publishers). This impression was pulled from Rembrandt's original plate around 255 years after he executed it. By 1906, Rembrandt's original plate was so badly worn, it was necessary for the printer's to re-work it to compensate for the loss of detail.

6. Stefano Della Bella (1610-1664). Italian
The Flight into Egypt. Rest at the Spring

Etching
ii/iii

Joseph draws water from the spring which issued forth from the root of the palm tree proving water for the Holy Family as they traveled through the desert.

7. Nicholas de Son (f. 1625-1626). French

Flight into Egypt

Etching

Note the falling pagan statue in the niche in the tree at upper right and the Massacre of the Innocents on the far left.

8. Sebastian Bourdon (1661-1671). French

*The Rest on the Flight into Egypt.
with an Angel*

Etching
ii/ii

9. Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727-18014). Italian

The Flight into Egypt. c. 1750
Plate 10 from the series

Etching
ii/ii

Purchased with funds donated by
Albert J. Crawford, Jr.

10. Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727-1804). Italia

The Flight into Egypt
"Arrival at the City Gate in Egypt"
Plate 27 from the series

Etching ii/ii

Purchased with funds donated by
The Art Angels

11. Sebastian Bourdon (1616-1671). French

The Return from Egypt

Etching
First state

Hall Cases

The verses that accompany the prints in the cases are by Br. Daniel Burke, and were part of his Christmas cards over the past years.

12. Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680), Dutch

Holy Family

Etching

13. Albrecht Durer (1471-1511), German

Adoration of the Magi 1511

Woodcut

14. Rembrandt van Ryn (1606-1669), Dutch

The Adoration of the Shepherds: With the Lamp
c. 1654

Etching

i/ii

15. Jan Muller (1571-1628), Dutch

Published by Claez Visscher

Rest on The Flight Into Egypt 1593

Engraving

iii/iii

